

CAN WORK BE SAFE, WHEN HOME ISN'T?

Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on
Work, Workers, and Workplaces in Sweden



**Western
Education**

Centre for Research & Education on
Violence Against Women & Children

Executive Summary

Globally, there is a growing body of research on the impact of intimate partner violence (IPV) on workplaces.¹⁻⁵ It is now clear that when workers are experiencing IPV at home, the impacts are felt in the workplace. IPV impacts the safety and productivity of workers and co-workers, resulting in lost revenue and increased costs to employers. At the same time, employment has significant protective value for those experiencing IPV, and workplaces can be important locations for changing social norms around violence in close relationships.

To gain a better understanding of the impact of intimate partner violence on work, employers and workplaces, researchers at Western University in Canada, commissioned by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, conducted a survey.

The survey was carried out in five Swedish authorities; The Swedish Gender Equality Agency, and the County Administrative Boards of Kronoberg, Skåne, Värmland and Västerbotten. The survey took place during September 2021 and was answered by a total of 859 people.

Some key findings include the following:

- Over one third of the surveyed workforce had been affected by some experience of IPV in their own lives or in the lives of their work colleagues. Overall, more women had experience of IPV than other genders.
- Around one in five women and one in ten men reported experiencing IPV. A small minority of respondents reported using abusive behaviours in their close relationships.
- Among those who had experienced IPV, almost 10 percent reported that abuse continued at or near the workplace in some way, for example, stalking, harassment, or abusive emails.
- Of those who reported experiencing IPV, over half reported that it affected their workplace performance, frequently due to being distracted, tired or unwell though sometimes due to injuries, unplanned absences, being unable to get to work or having to leave early.
- Only around one quarter of respondents who had experienced IPV discussed the violence with somebody at work, overwhelmingly with co-workers or supervisors/managers.
- Among the few workers who reported using abusive behaviour, half had reached out for help and around one in five reported that they would seek help if asked to do so by a supervisor or manager.

- Around one quarter of respondents had a co-worker who they believed had experienced IPV and around one in eight reported having a colleague who they believed may have used abusive behaviours. Most felt that these experiences may have had an impact on their colleagues' work performance.
- Respondents frequently reported awareness of potential warning signs of IPV experiences and of using abusive behaviours in their work colleagues, suggesting that there are opportunities to start discussions.
- There was overwhelming support among respondents for recognizing the impact of IPV on the lives of workers and for employers to take action to address this issue.

Recommendations were made for employers to undertake activities to plan for change, implement better support to workers, provide training, communicate their actions, and engage in ongoing review of their progress in making workplaces safe and supportive.

Background

Intimate partner violence is a serious and widespread problem worldwide that causes both physical and psychological suffering, with consequences at the individual, family, society level, and beyond.⁶ Research has shown impacts and significant costs associated with IPV for both employers and employees; however, more research is needed to better understand the context and scope of this issue in Sweden.

People who experience violence in their relationships are impacted in their physical and mental health. In addition, there are links between experiences of IPV and employment. Women with a history of IPV are more likely to have a disrupted work history, including increased short-term absences and longer periods of illness.⁷

Being subjected to violence can lead to lower income, more frequent work displacement, a greater likelihood of losing your work, and a greater likelihood of working in casual and part-time roles compared to women without experiences of IPV.⁸⁻¹¹ Earnings are reduced by 25 percent for women and 14 percent for men who have experienced IPV, while absence due to illness increases by 20 percent for both women and men. These effects occur while violence is occurring but can also continue for years after the violence has ended.¹²

According to a *National Prevalence Study on Exposure to Violence among Women and Men* and its Association to approximately 20 percent of women and ten percent of men have been victims of violence in intimate partner relationships.¹³ In addition to human suffering, violence also costs large sums of money; in 2014, the European Institute for Gender Equality estimated that men's violence against women in Sweden costs approximately SEK 40 billion per year.¹⁴

The statistics above show that the experience of violence is common — so common that most people in their professional life will have met or encountered someone who is or has been a victim of IPV. This means that most managers may have a co-worker who is living with violence, currently or has a history of violence. Workplaces also include those who have previously or are currently perpetrating IPV. In a Belgian survey, more than 11 percent said that the person who perpetrates violence against them works in the same workplace.¹⁵

According to the report *Economic Consequences of Men's Violence Against Women: An Overview of Knowledge and Cost Calculations Based on Three Typical Cases*, statistics have been compiled by the National Board of Health and Welfare

that makes it reasonable to assume that the Swedish Social Insurance Agency handles 11,000 cases annually related to sick leave, rehabilitation, or activity compensation, related to assault, violation of a woman's integrity and unlawful threat against women.¹⁶

In an Australian survey from 2011, almost half of those surveyed answered that exposure to violence affected their ability to work.¹⁷ Nineteen percent reported that the violence continued in the workplace, including examples such as threatening phone calls and e-mails. This research shows that violence continues in the workplace and that many employees are aware of a co-worker experiencing or perpetrating IPV. As a result of this project, over 1,600,000 Australian workers are now covered by domestic/family violence workplace benefits, including dedicated paid leave, protection from adverse action and flexible work arrangements.¹⁸

Recognizing IPV

There are several signs that someone at work is living with violence in their everyday life. For those experiencing violence from a partner, this may include frequent absences from work, constantly and urgently attending to phone calls or text messages while working and being stringent about having the exact same arrival and departure time every day. For those perpetrating violence in their intimate relationships, this may include frequent lateness for work, frequent calls to a partner during working hours, and difficulty focusing on work tasks.

Managers need knowledge and support from an employer's perspective. However, detection and support can also be found between employees. It is therefore important that both managers and employees are included in this work.

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is actively working on IPV as an employer issue and is running a pilot project with four County Administrative Boards in Kronoberg, Skåne, Värmland, and Västerbotten. As part of this work, managers at the four County Administrative Boards and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency have received training on intimate partner violence and sexual harassment.

The employer's perspective on violence falls within the framework of gender mainstreaming, as well as the national strategy to prevent and combat men's

The survey began with the following text:

Being mistreated and victim of IPV can take many forms. Both men and women can be victims to violence in an intimate relationship and both men and women can perpetrate intimate partner violence relationship. Intimate partner violence occurs in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

When you answer the questions in the survey the questions are based on the UN definition of different types of exposure to violence; physical, sexual, psychological, latent, material, economic and disability-related violence.

violence against women. To better equip managers and employees, work is also underway to develop a web-based training course focusing on the employer's ability to detect domestic violence.

In 2019, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment at Work which focuses on sexual harassment and domestic violence. An inquiry was set up in 2020 to investigate if Sweden would be able to ratify ILO Convention 190, the analysis and the assessment of the inquiry shows that there is nothing that prevent Sweden from ratifying the ILO convention. Although Sweden meets the requirements for ratification of the convention, the inquiry sees a need for clarification of work environment legislation. The convention also highlights the impact of IPV on working life. The investigation therefore sees a need for a mission in the form of information initiatives on which regulations may be relevant for an employer and how knowledge about IPV can be disseminated in the form of a practical methodological support for employers.

Purpose of this report

To increase knowledge of how IPV affects employees and managers, to improve detection of violence, and to contribute to knowledge mobilization in an area that needs to be made visible and highlighted, this survey has been implemented in cooperation with the four county administrative boards. The results could also assist in preparation for the ratification of ILO Convention 190, which focuses on sexual harassment and IPV.

Methodology and implementation

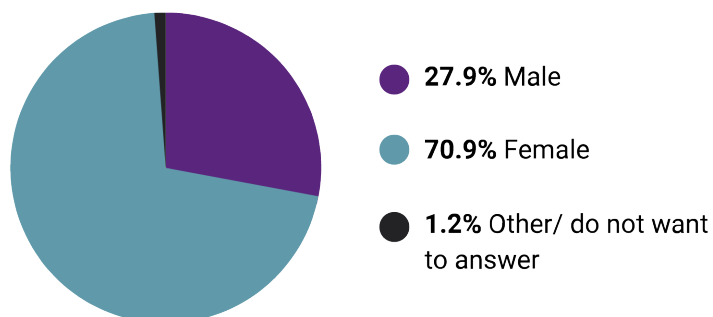
The survey was developed by a project team consisting of researchers at DV@WorkNet, Western University in Canada and senior advisors at the Swedish Gender Equality Agency's department responsible for supporting implementation of the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. Results and recommendations are the responsibility of the researchers at DV@WorkNet independently. DV@WorkNet is an international network of researchers, experts on IPV, Community organisation and trade unions, among others to raise awareness of IPV in the workplace. In September 2021, a web survey was conducted on the impact of IPV on work, workers and in workplaces. The survey was open to employees of the five authorities.

Previous versions of this survey have been administered in Canada, Belgium, Taiwan, Mongolia, and other countries. This survey was available to 1578 individuals at the four County Administrative Boards and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. It was distributed via an open internet link given to the involved organizations, an advertisement posted to their Intranet and via email. The survey consisted of a range of questions focused on people's experiences with IPV and the workplace, including questions on if they were personally experiencing, or had ever experienced IPV, and if they knew of anyone at their workplace who was experiencing or perpetrating IPV. Those with personal IPV experience were asked additional questions such as how the IPV impacted their work and their coworkers, whether they discussed the violence with anyone at work, and what types of workplace supports they received. The survey was reviewed and approved by Western's Research Ethics Board. This report outlines the main findings from the survey.

Who took part?

A total of 859 people completed the survey (response rate of 54.4 percent). Of those who responded, 70.9 percent were female, 27.9 percent were male, and 1.2 percent identified as 'other' or chose not to disclose gender information. Due to the small number of respondents who identified their gender as "other" no further analysis was done with this group. The majority of respondents were aged 30-49 years (60.3 percent), 7.9 percent were under 29 years of age, 31.2 percent were 50 years or older, and less than one percent did not disclose their age. Most people in the sample were permanently employed (81.7 percent), with a minority having temporary (Contract/Probationary/Seasonal/Hourly) employment (17.5 percent) or choosing not to disclose employment status (0.8 percent).

FIGURE 1: Survey respondents by gender

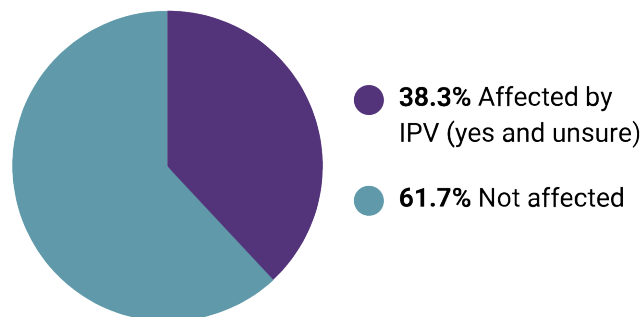


Workers Whose Lives Have Been Affected by Intimate Partner Violence

“It is important to dare to talk about and to dare to ask how it is, and be there when you suspect something. It is not only a managerial responsibility. The manager is often further away from everyday life.”

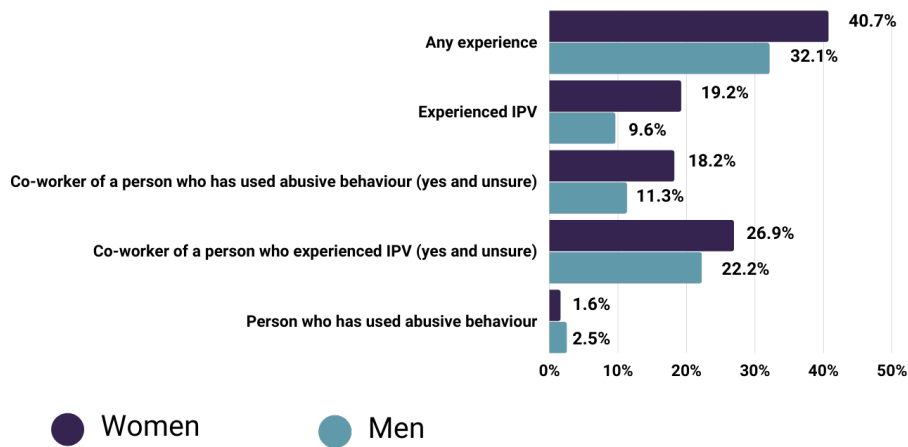
IPV is an issue that often has negative consequences for employees and employers. Overall, 38.3 percent of respondents reported that they had been affected in some way in their lives by IPV, either through their own experiences or through a colleague’s experiences. Women were more likely to report experiences of IPV with around one in five women (19.2 percent) reporting recent or past IPV experiences. Women respondents were also more likely to know a co-worker who they suspected may have experienced IPV (22.2 percent) or used abusive behaviour in their relationship (18.2 percent).

FIGURE 2: Workers whose lives have been affected by IPV



In comparison, almost one in ten men (9.6 percent) reported recent or past experiences of abuse, 22.1 percent reported having at least one co-worker who they thought may be experiencing IPV and 11.3 percent reported having a co-worker who they thought may have used abusive behaviour. Fewer respondents reported using abusive behaviour in their own relationships. Specifically, 2.5 percent of men and 1.6 percent of women respondents reported that they had ever used violence against a current or former partner. In subsequent sections, greater detail on the nature and impact of each of these experiences is provided.

FIGURE 3: Workers whose lives have been affected by IPV



“Being a victim of intimate partner violence is not just a private matter, it is everyone’s concern to put an end to it. Always. And we must not forget that violence is not always committed outside the workplace. And sometimes you are also a colleague of your perpetrator.”

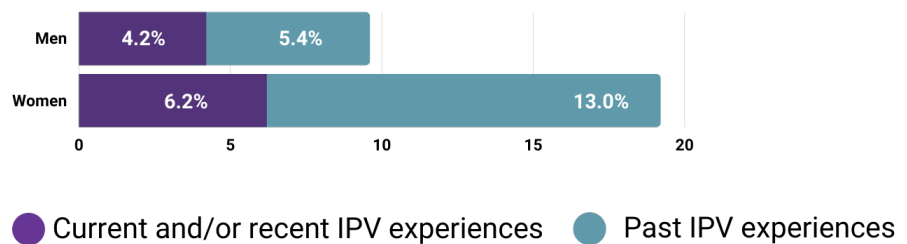
“The workplace is probably important for an exposed person, as a refuge from the control.”

“Think it’s hard to talk about this because there’s still a stigma attached to being vulnerable. There is a lack of understanding of those who remain in such a relationship and widespread lack of knowledge as to why this can happen. Responsibility is still placed on the victim if they do not leave immediately. Partly because many know little about the psychology behind it and partly because it is unpleasant to talk about.”

Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence

Overall, 16.5 percent of respondents reported experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime. This corresponds to approximately one in five women (19.2 percent) and one in ten men (9.6 percent). For 6.2 percent of women and 4.2 percent of men, reported experiences of IPV were recent (i.e., within the past year) and for the remainder, IPV had occurred more than one year ago. There is evidence that the prevalence of IPV is often underestimated¹⁹ due to underreporting so it is possible that these rates are lower than the true prevalence of IPV.²⁰

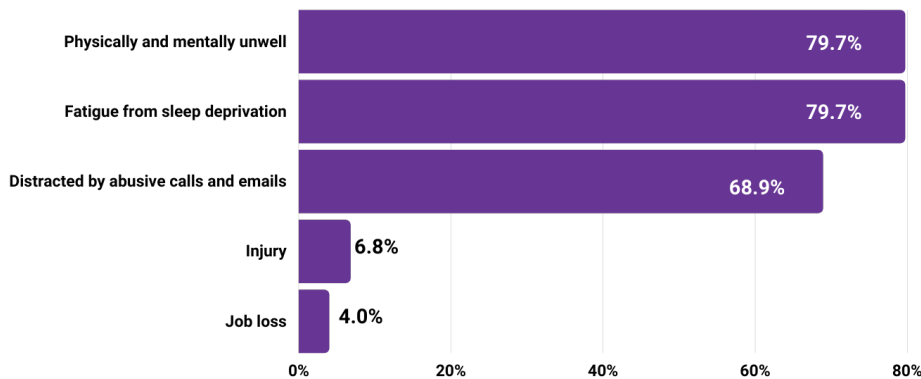
FIGURE 4: Current/recent and past IPV experiences



Occurrence of IPV in the workplace and impact on work performance

Over half of workers who reported experiencing IPV (53.2 percent) indicated that their work performance was negatively impacted. Affected workers reported feeling physically and mentally unwell (79.7 percent), tired due to sleep deprivation (79.7 percent) or distracted by abusive calls and emails (68.9 percent). A few workers were injured due to the abuse (6.8 percent) or reported losing their job due to the impact of IPV on their work performance (4.0 percent).

FIGURE 5: Ways that IPV experiences impacted work performance



In addition to the impact on their ability to work, 8.5 percent of all employees who had experienced intimate partner violence also stated that violence occurred at or near the workplace. Examples of actions at the workplace included stalking or harassment (46.2 percent), derogatory emails (38.5 percent), derogatory phone calls/SMS (23.1 percent), contacting colleagues of the worker (23.1 percent), derogatory messages on social media (15.4 percent) and threats (15.4 percent). A majority of victims (5.7 percent) reported that the violent partner worked at the same workplace, which posed additional risks of consequences for the victim.

“As he stood and shouted and swore all that he could in front of my workplace where everyone could hear him, it was obviously hard to keep it together and focus on the work once he got tired and left the place.”

“Not allowed to sleep, exhausted at work, fell asleep while working.”

“Hard to take the business contacts that I needed, with the risk of jealousy and reactions associated with that.”

“Partner initiated quarrel over small things in the mornings that became big and made me not to leave home when I needed to, partly because it was difficult to leave in the middle of it and partly because I was so sad and angry that I didn’t want to see other people.”

“Stopped me from sleeping at night because of the shouting and arguing.”

“To get out of bed was almost impossible.”

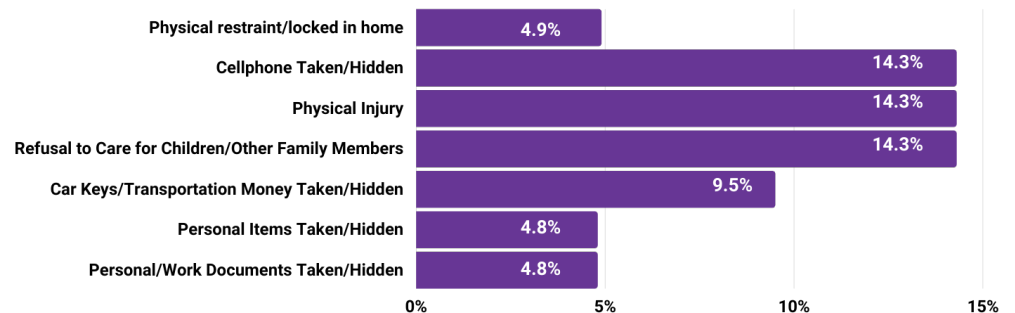
“I have been exhausted and on sick leave due to the violence I was subjected to.”

“He sold my car without my knowledge.”

Impact of IPV on unplanned absence and ability to get to work

Among workers who reported experiencing IPV, 15.0 percent reported having to take time off work because of IPV including taking time off from work to attend criminal (14.3 percent) or family courts (19.0 percent), meetings with lawyers and police (33.3 percent), counseling sessions related to coping with IPV (33.3 percent) and having to deal with medical (14.3 percent) or accommodation issues (e.g., relocation or shelter stay; 9.5 percent). Other issues resulting in absence from work included needing time to recover/heal from abuse, needing some time alone and as a result of being unable to sleep/exhausted.

FIGURE 6: Ways that experiences of IPV interfered with ability to get to work



In addition to resulting in absences, experiencing abuse interfered with workers’ ability to get to or stay at their workplace for 15.1 percent respondents (e.g., being late, having to leave early). Among workers who reported that IPV affected their ability to get to work, interferences included:

- physical restraint/being locked in the home (33.3 percent);
- having a cellphone taken/hidden (14.3 percent);
- physical injury (14.3 percent);
- refusal to care for children or other family members (14.3 percent);
- car keys or transportation money taken (9.5 percent);
- withholding of required personal items such as clothing (4.8 percent); or personal/work documents (4.8 percent); and
- several other forms of interference (61.9 percent).

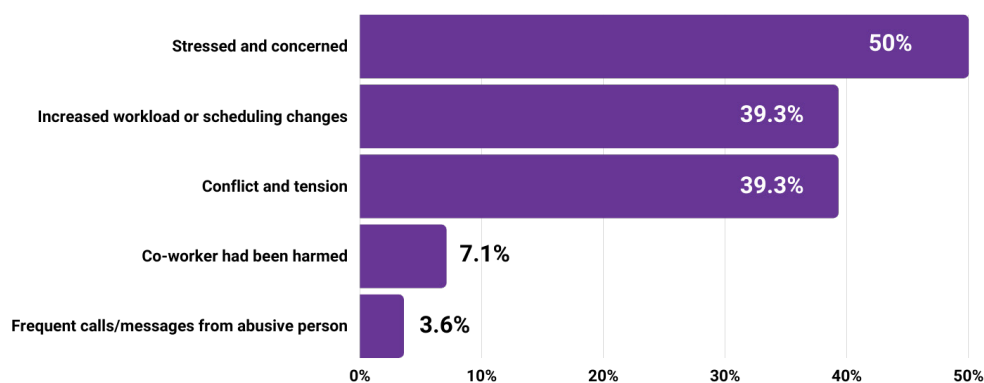
Often, respondents reported experiencing multiple forms of interference.

Impact of IPV on co-workers

Workers who reported experiencing IPV were asked whether they believed their experiences affected their co-workers in some way. Most believed that IPV did not affect their co-workers, with the remainder indicating there was an impact (9.4 percent), were unsure (11.5 percent), or did not answer the question (2.1 percent).

Respondents who believed their co-workers had been affected or were unsure were then asked about possible impact on co-workers. Impacts reported included co-workers being stressed and concerned about their situation (50.0 percent), increased workload or scheduling changes for co-workers (39.3 percent) and conflict and tension between themselves and the co-workers due to changes to workloads/deadlines/shared projects (39.3 percent). A few people indicated that a co-worker had been harmed (7.1 percent) or had to deal with frequent calls and messages from an abusive partner (3.6 percent).

FIGURE 7: Perceived impact of IPV on co-workers



“I was on sick leave. As a result, my colleagues had a higher workload.”

“I become an inferior colleague when I feel down, the workplace is affected when you cannot contribute to create a good environment.

You are too absorbed by yourself / the relationship with your partner to be able to care about others.”

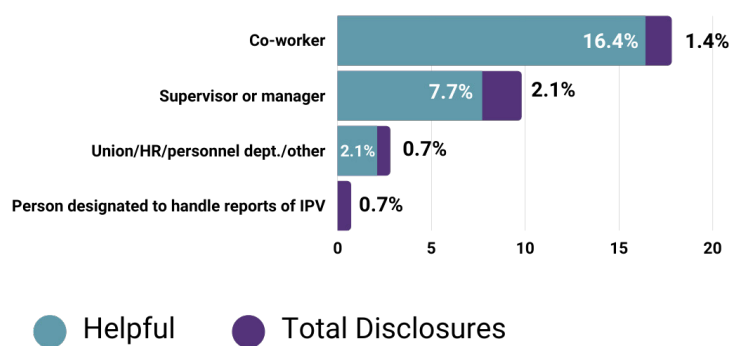
“That it can also affect the colleagues of the victim. The behavior of the victim as a result of the violence may in some cases create irritation, for example, that he or she is not performing as expected, not performing their duties satisfactorily. Since one is often unaware of what the colleague is being exposed to, the irritation may be directed at the colleague and one makes the situation of the victim even worse.”

“My relationship with my colleagues has never extended outside of work. Do not feel that we have that kind of relationship where we talk about such private things. Experiences that most workplaces do not have places that are secluded enough to be able to take ‘difficult’ conversations.”

Disclosure at the workplace: Frequency and reasoning behind disclosure decisions

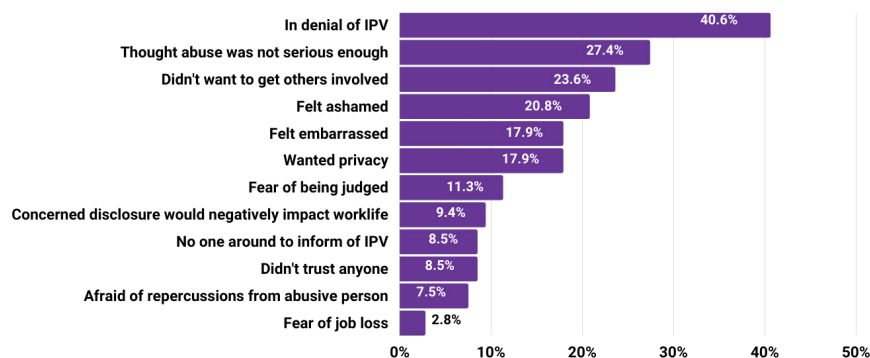
Nearly a quarter (23.7 percent) of workers who experienced abuse disclosed their abuse to someone at work. Among workers who disclosed, most discussed their abuse with a co-worker (81.8 percent) and/or to a supervisor or manager (42.4 percent). Generally, those who disclosed information to a co-worker felt the co-worker was helpful (92.6 percent) and most who reported to supervisor or manager found them to be helpful (78.6 percent). Fewer than three percent of respondents reported that they disclosed their experiences of abuse to a designated person, to human resources, or to a union representative.

FIGURE 8: Experiences with disclosure to someone in the workplace



Most workers (76.2 percent) however, did not disclose incidents of IPV to anyone in the workplace. Among workers who did not disclose, 40.6 percent reported that they were in denial of the IPV, 27.4 percent believed the abuse was not severe enough, 23.6 percent did not want to get others involved, 20.8 percent felt ashamed, 17.9 percent felt embarrassed, 17.9 percent wanted privacy, 11.3 percent were afraid of being judged, 9.4 percent were concerned that the disclosure would negatively impact their job or work environment, 8.5 percent said there was no one around to tell, 8.5 percent reported that they did not trust anyone, 7.5 percent were afraid that their abusive partner would find out they had told someone and 2.8 percent believed they would lose their job if they disclosed the incident.

FIGURE 9: Reasons for not disclosing IPV at the workplace



Respondents wrote about various other reasons for not disclosing their experiences of abuse at work. Respondents often reported that their relationships with work colleagues did not extend beyond the workplace and that they felt that a disclosure of IPV would be too personal.

A few respondents indicated that the abuse happened many years ago, while they were students or were not employed. These respondents often said that they did not realize until later how serious the violence was.

Finally, some respondents reported that they did not disclose because they didn't feel that they would be believed, that disclosure would create problems in the workplace or that telling someone was pointless because it would not make the situation better.

“Everyone seemed to like my ex-partner and her treatment of me was never seem to be disclosed. Did not think anyone would believe me.”

“Afraid of not being believed because I’m a man.”

“I was in a managerial position and did not want to say anything to employees. Had a solitary role in the workplace.”

“I was young and it was not physical. Did not realize until later how bad it was.”

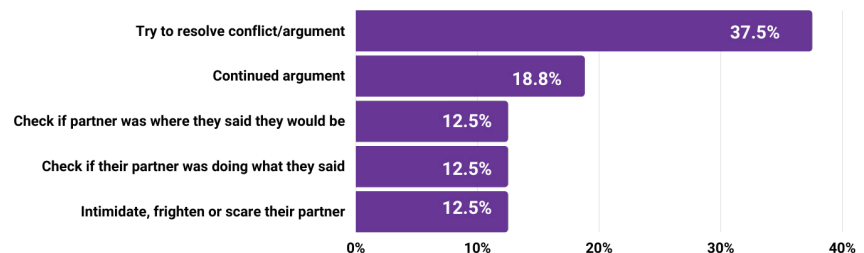
“Didn’t even think about telling anyone.”

“Anyone who practices intimate partner violence probably has an outlook on life in which this is something normal and that is how this person usually act. It is not just the violence in itself that affects this person on workplace, but rather affects this person’s outlook and behavior throughout their whole life.”

Use of Abusive Behaviours in Close Relationships

The current survey is one of the first to directly ask the general workforce population about their use of abusive behaviours in close relationships. All respondents were asked if they have ever behaved violently towards either a current or former partner. Since denial and minimization are part of a typical pattern of abusive behaviour, it was expected that very few respondents would report using abuse in their own relationships.²¹ Nevertheless, 2.5 percent of male respondents and 1.6 percent of female respondents reported engaging in abusive behaviours during work hours. Reported reasons for contact during work hours among those who reported using abusive behaviours included to try to resolve an earlier conflict/argument (37.5 percent), continue an earlier argument (18.8 percent), check if their partner/ex-partner was where they said they would be (12.5 percent) or was doing what they said they would do (12.5 percent) or to intimidate, threaten, or scare their (ex)partner (12.5 percent).

FIGURE 10: Reasons for contacting partner during work hours



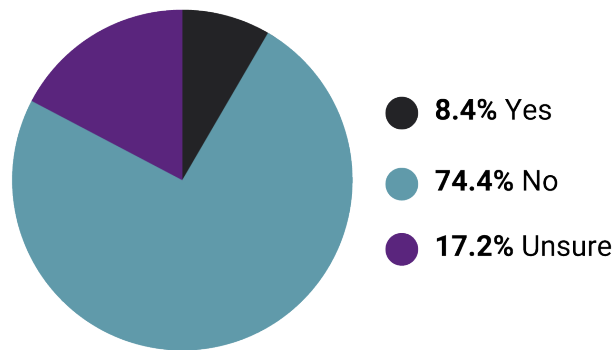
Half of those who reported using abusive behaviours indicated that they had sought help (for example, from friends and family, services, and self-help resources), 25.0 percent had talked about their IPV issues with someone at work, and 18.8 percent indicated that they would act on an employer’s request to seek help to change their abusive behaviour.

Co-Workers Experience

Co-workers who have experienced IPV

Respondents were also asked about the prevalence and perceived impact of experiences of IPV amongst their co-workers. When asked about their co-workers, around one quarter (25.6 percent) of respondents indicated that they had at least one co-worker who they believed may be experiencing or have previously experienced IPV. From the respondents, 8.4 percent were sure of their co-workers' experiences of IPV and 17.2 percent reported being unsure. Participants who responded yes or were unsure were then asked whether the abuse affected their co-worker. Most respondents (85.8 percent) agreed or reported being unsure of whether the affected colleagues work performance was impacted; few reported no perceived impact.

FIGURE 11: Co-workers who have experienced IPV

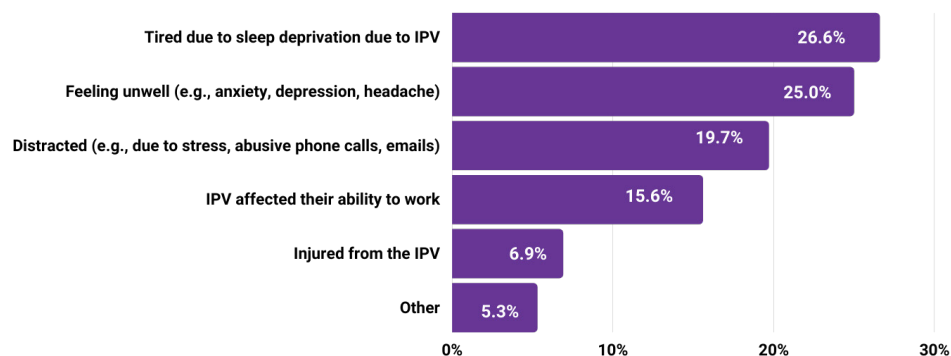


Among respondents who reported possible impacts on the affected colleague's ability to work, respondents were most likely to report noticing that their co-workers were tired due to sleep deprivation (26.6 percent), unwellness including anxiety, depression, headache (25.0 percent), distracted by stress or abusive calls/messages (19.7 percent) and injured from abuse (6.9 percent).

“Overheard a phone call that didn’t feel good/right, but unfortunately didn’t ask about it later so I’m not sure who was on the line.”

“I was a manager and my employee did not keep appointments, did not perform tasks and constantly talked about the partner in different ways. The person eventually chose to leave the relationship and also to change jobs. New life. Hope it all went well.”

FIGURE 12: Perception of IPV impact on co-workers’ work performance



Signs of experiencing intimate partner violence

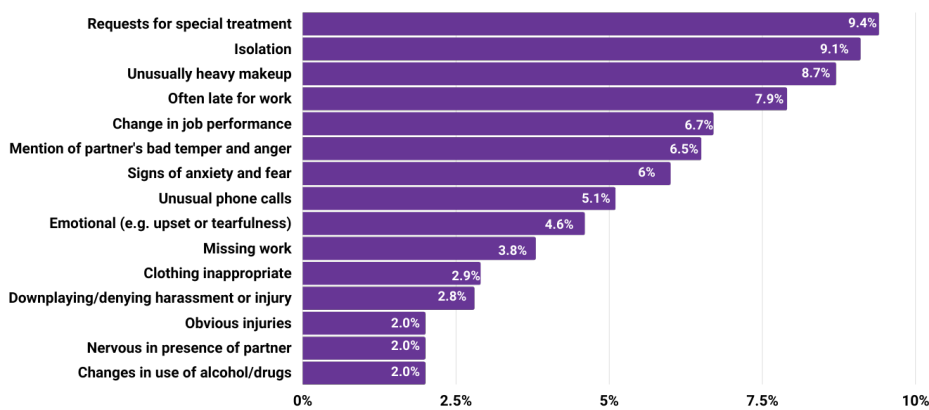
Respondents were also asked about potential warning signs that a co-worker may be experiencing intimate partner violence. Over one quarter (29.3 percent) of respondents reported seeing at least one indicator of potential IPV. There were two types of potential signs that were most observed. The first type were potential signs that related to work performance such as requests for special treatment such as leaving early (9.4 percent), often being late for work (7.9 percent) and sensitivity about home life (7.7 percent) and changes in job performance with observations of poor concentration, mistakes, slowness, or inconsistent work quality (6.7 percent).

The second type of potential signs that were reported fairly frequently were tension and anxiety around discussion of a partner such as isolation or keeping to oneself (9.1 percent), unusually heavy makeup (8.7 percent), mention of a partner’s bad temper and anger (6.5 percent), signs of anxiety and fear (6.0 percent), an unusual number of phone calls, strong reactions to those calls, and reluctance to talk or respond to phone messages (5.1 percent).

Other signs such as obvious injuries, knowledge of insensitive/insulting phone messages left for the colleague, or the appearance of gifts/flowers after an argument were less commonly observed.

In their comments, respondents remarked that these signs were not necessarily indicators of IPV; that they could also be due to other problems such as mental health or substance abuse. Results are nevertheless noteworthy as such signs are indications of the need for deeper exploration and greater workplace support.

FIGURE 13: Potential signs of experiencing IPV in co-workers



Respondents gave numerous examples of how their saw colleagues' work impacted by experiences of IPV victimization.

“Unable to perform their work properly — working too little for their employment rate. Others have to ‘clean up’ after her. Her learning ability has decreased.”

“A colleague who openly told and then distanced herself from her violent husband and another colleague who I was told by others that her salary was taken by her husband and that he restricted her freedom in various other ways.”

“Derogatory comment from the partner who also works at the same workplace.”

“Stressed to catch the right bus home, cannot be late at home.”

“Talked on the phone during the break instead of having coffee.”

“Was often on short sick leave.”

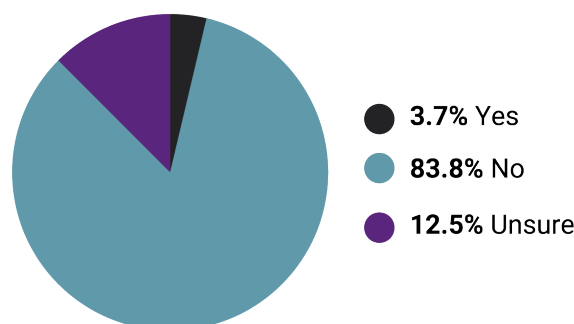
“Cancelled scheduled meetings several times, just five minutes before.”

“I know, that a not close colleague, exposed his wife to threats and violence as he told me about a police report etc. I think this colleague needs to talk about this and get support in changing his aggressive behavior and get support to become a better parent. I have recommended the men crisis center.”

Co-workers who have used abusive behaviour

Workers may engage in or talk about abusive acts at the workplace and may experience work-related impacts. When asked if they knew a past or present co-worker may be using abusive behaviour, around one in eight (16.2 percent) participants was aware of at least one co-worker who they believed may be abusive in a close relationship. Of the respondents, 3.7 percent reported being sure of their co-workers’ use of abusive behaviour and 12.5 percent were unsure. Of those who had said yes or were unsure, most respondents (78.8 percent) agreed or reported being unsure of whether the affected colleagues work performance was impacted; few reported no perceived impact.

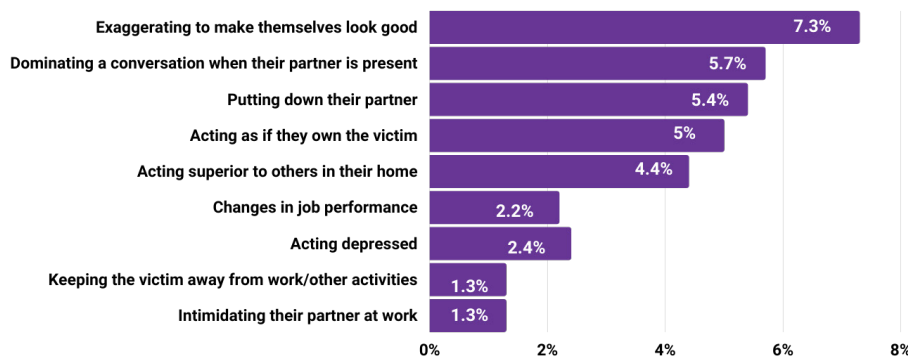
FIGURE 14: Co-workers who have used abusive behaviour



Respondents were also asked about their recognition of potential signs of using abusive behaviour. From the respondents, 14.8 percent reported that they observed one or more of the following signs that a co-worker engaged in abusive behaviour. Potential signs that were most often observed were lying or exaggerating to make themselves look good (7.3 percent), dominating a conversation when their partner is present (5.7 percent), putting down their partner (5.4 percent), acting as if they own the victim (5.0 percent) or is superior to others in their home (4.4 percent). Other potential signs such as acting depressed, showing changes in job performance, trying to keep the victim away from work/other activities, and contacting their partner while at work to say something that might scare/intimidate them were reported infrequently. Respondents did, however, give numerous other examples of potential signs and indicators of abusive behaviours that they had observed while at work including frequent angry outbursts, hearing threats or disparaging

comments and having a co-worker talk about their abusive behaviour. In their comments, respondents also remarked that it could be difficult to decide how to proceed and what to do when a co-worker was displaying these types of behaviours.

FIGURE 15: Potential signs of using abusive behaviour in co-workers



“Acts aggressively and frighteningly without being able to control the anger.”

“Outbursts that are aggressive over work situations.”

“Access to password to partner’s Facebook account.”

“Talks disparagingly about one’s partner.”

“Threatening jokes ‘If she gets pregnant, I’ll kick her down the stairs’.”

“Treat women in the same way at work, especially if the person has a leading position. It affects the work situation for other women.”

“Lower concentration, unpleasant behavior also towards others in certain contexts.”

“A former colleague said that he checked his girlfriend’s genitals when he thought it had taken a long time for her to get home from work.”

“Lies, insecure, try to create a facade through work and do not manage do the tasks that are supposed to be done.”

“It is important to dare to be a good colleague and dare to ask if the gut feeling is bad. It’s not just a managerial responsibility. The manager is often further away from everyday life.”

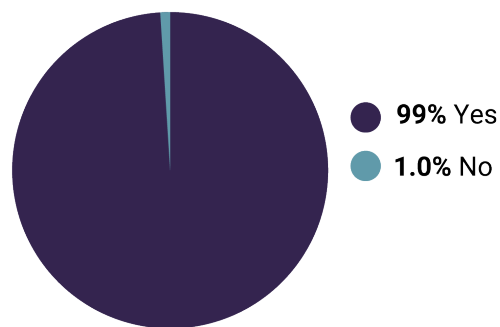
“It is important that all staff receive training in, for example, what signs to look out for to be able to support a potentially abused colleague.”

Beliefs About Intimate Partner Violence in the Workplace

Respondents were then asked about their perceptions of how IPV might impact people at work, and what employers can do to address this issue.

Nearly all participants (99.0 percent) indicated an understanding that intimate partner violence impacts the work lives of all that are exposed in some way. Over three quarters of all respondents (79.1 percent) also believe that IPV impacts the work lives of workers who have behaved abusively in their close relationships.

FIGURE 16: Belief that IPV impacts the work lives of all exposed

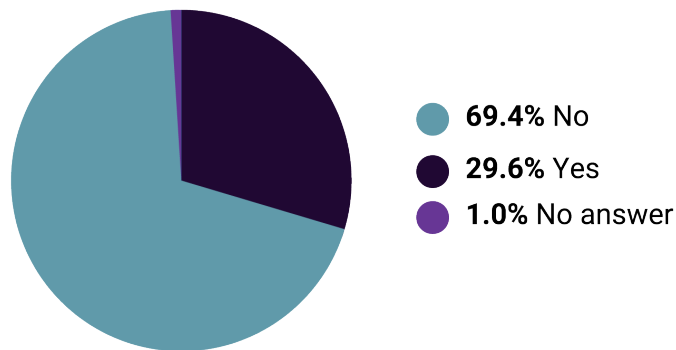


Respondents often added comments about the importance of recognizing and responding to IPV in the workplace.

“It is good that this is being implemented as part of the employer’s responsibility. But more importantly, managers and colleagues see, ask and react early on suspicions and concerns about both exposure to violence and violence in any form.”

Despite the perceived importance of addressing IPV in the workplace, fewer than one third of respondents (29.6 percent) reported that they had received information about IPV from their employer. Most often, when respondents had received information, they had attended an information session or workplace meeting, though in a few cases, respondents had attended courses. Respondents most often received this information from employers/managers, through presentations from experts (e.g., women’s shelters, NGOs) or through conversation with colleagues. Respondents seldom reported receiving information from Human Resources or through review of policy or guidelines on IPV.

FIGURE 17: Employees who received information about IPV



When reflecting on this, respondents often suggested that review of IPV-related concerns should be part of regular practice.

“It should be included as a question in the yearly employee interviews and all managers should receive training in the area.”

“I think it is very important to have leaders who are trained in these issues and who show commitment and keep them updated. If you as a colleague need to have that support, you also need to receive training in this area.”

“Workplaces and employers generally need to take greater account of their employees’ mental and physical health, not only because a bad mood negatively affects work performance but because it increases cohesion and the chance of good health and an open conversational climate. The lower the threshold is for when someone ask for help, the easier it is to solve it and get back a happy, well-functioning colleague.”

“It should be an issue that is addressed in the yearly staff appraisal, as a matter of routine. And at the occupational health service. Employers should work to reduce the stigma of talking about men’s violence against women and violence in close relationships. Should be a requirement for government agencies.”

A few reflected that, had their employer known about their situation, they might have been able to offer support at a critical period in their lives.

“I wish my manager/employer would have included in my work introduction safe information about where I can turn to in case of exposure to violence/perpetration of violence. And that someone had followed it up later, at a staff appraisal or an employee day to show that it is an issue that lives in the organization.”

Finally, a few people talked about the importance of expanding awareness to other forms of violence and abuse that might be occurring in the lives of workers, such as harassment, child maltreatment and abuse of older people.

“The issue is complex. Violence in close relationships is just partially relevant and an unjustified narrowing of the issue. Problems and intrigue and harassment are common everywhere in society, not just in close relationships. Think you’re missing some of the usefulness of the survey with this focus and should broaden it.”

Conclusions

Over one third of the surveyed workforce had been affected by some experience of IPV in their own lives or in the lives of their work colleagues. Around one in five women and one in ten men reported experiencing IPV and a small minority reported using abusive behaviours in their close relationships. Of those who reported IPV experiences, over half reported that it affected their workplace performance, frequently due to being distracted, tired or unwell though sometimes due to injuries, unplanned absences, being unable to get to work or having to leave early. Only around one quarter of respondents who had experienced IPV discussed the violence with somebody at work, overwhelmingly with co-workers or supervisors/managers. Far less respondents disclosed to Human Resources department, unions, or designated people. Often respondents reported that they were in denial about their IPV experiences, or that they felt embarrassed and ashamed and didn't feel close enough to work colleagues to discuss their experiences. Among the few who reported using abusive behaviour, half had reached out for help and around one in five reported that they would seek help if asked to do so by a supervisor or manager.

Respondents also reported on the prevalence and impact of IPV on their co-workers. Around one quarter of respondents had a co-worker who they believed had, or have had, experienced IPV and around one in eight reported having a colleague who they believed may have used abusive behaviours. Most felt that these experiences may have had an impact on their colleagues' work performance. Respondents also frequently reported awareness of potential signs of IPV experiences and of using abusive behaviours in their work colleagues. They provided many examples of concerns, such as overhearing derogatory comments, perceiving their co-workers as nervous or sensitive about discussing their home lives, and seeing workplace impacts (e.g., unexplained absences, meetings cancelled at the last minute) that could have led to more in-depth conversations with their co-workers about their situations and the support that they might require.

Finally, there was overwhelming support in respondents for recognizing the impact of IPV on the lives of workers and for employers to take action to address this issue. In the words of one respondent: *"It is very important that we start talking about these issues in the workplace and that we increase the level of knowledge of both employees and management."* Fewer than one third of respondents reported receiving information from their employers about IPV; moreover, when information was received, it was very seldom shared as part of policy or standard human resource practice.

Recommendations

Based on previous research and these findings, a range of recommendations may be made for employers to better support workers who experience IPV. Creating a plan to overcome sociocultural barriers to eliminating IPV and address the impact of IPV in workplaces is best done as a collaborative process within specific workplaces. This process should include consideration of results of workplace surveys as well as a review of current policy, training, communication, and iterative feedback. Some helpful recommendations relevant to a broad range of workplaces are as follows:

Plan for change

Encourage strong leadership on issues of IPV in the workplace and proactively engage workers in conversation around issues of IPV prevention and intervention.

When you, as an employer, work with work environment, you need to do it in a systematic and planned way. To work systematically with the work environment is a continuous process with recurring activities. This working method could be applied to the IPV work as well.²²

Actions are particularly important in the context of increased risk for IPV due to COVID-19, changes to ways of working (i.e., more work from home) associated with COVID-19 and the opportunity that these changes have presented for reviewing and re-thinking priorities for creating safe and supportive workplaces.

Implement key changes to better support workers

Each organization will identify different areas of change. Key areas of change generally include the following:

Develop comprehensive workplace policies and procedures related to IPV workplace which include risk assessments, reporting procedures, and supports for workers experiencing IPV. Policies need to include digital environments and the array of platforms now used to conduct work, which may also be used to monitor, harass, and continue IPV.

Develop and implement work-from-home agreements that include considerations relevant to reporting and responding to IPV. Develop and include questions/guides for supervisors/managers to screen for IPV during performance evaluations. An employee subjected to violence also may leave the organization, questions may also be asked during exit interviews. These represent learning opportunities for the organization, but also opportunities to intervene.

Provide training

For all employees, develop concrete education, awareness raising, and training materials that are accessible to workers and appropriate to their workplace.

For leaders, provide specialized training and establish support mechanisms where employees can turn to for assistance when dealing with IPV situations. Ensure that leaders at all levels throughout the organization know their roles and responsibilities in preventing IPV and supporting employees impacted by IPV.

For IT departments, consider training on strategies to deal with technology facilitated abuse. Such training may include how IT departments can assist with abusive phone calls and emails, ensuring perpetrators cannot install surveillance software on computers and cell phones owned by the organization.

Communicate actions

Recognize that IPV is a workplace issue and a problem that impacts the workplace, including productivity, in multiple ways. Plan for communications along the way knowing that an effective communications strategy is critical to ensure the engagement and buy-in of all members throughout the larger organization. Communications strategies are most effective when they are tailored to an organization and continually developed in collaboration and in dialogue with leaders and other key organizational members.

Provide and post lists of internal and external resources for survivors and perpetrators of IPV, including legal, counselling, and safety planning resources, in an accessible and visible location.

Review progress and make improvements

Evaluate the effectiveness of policies, training and other measures taken to prevent and respond to IPV at regular intervals. Workplaces should consider repeated surveys/assessments to measure negative consequences of IPV on workplaces (e.g., presenteeism and absenteeism, tardiness) and change in key areas of workplace response.

Learn from reports and investigations about where improvements need to be made (e.g., do policies need to be modified, does the workplace need more training, are leaders in specific areas of the workplace meeting their roles and responsibilities, etc.). Have procedures in place that will regularly harness this information.

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Appendix

Supplemental Tables

TABLE 1: Prevalence and impact of experiencing IPV and of using abusive behaviours

	Number asked or responded to the question	Number yes	Percent
Experienced IPV	859	142	16.5
Female respondents	609	117	19.2
Male respondents	240	23	9.6
IPV recent and/or ongoing - female	609	38	6.2
IPV recent and/or ongoing - male	240	10	4.2
IPV past only - female	609	79	13.0
IPV past only - male	240	13	5.4
Impact on workplace performance	139	74	53.2
Acts of abuse at or near workplace (yes and unsure)	141	13	9.2
Impact on ability to get to work	139	21	15.1
Had to take time off work (unplanned absences)	140	21	15.0
Experience IPV at or near workplace (yes and unsure)	141	13	9.2
Impact on co-workers (yes and unsure)	139	29	20.9
Yes	139	13	9.4
Unsure	139	16	11.5
Used abusive behaviour	859	16	1.9
Female respondents	609	10	1.6
Male respondents	240	6	2.5
Respondent has sought help	16	8	50.0
If your employer asked, would you seek help?	16	3	18.8
Discussed experiences of IPV with someone at the workplace	139	33	23.7

TABLE 2: Prevalence and impact of IPV amongst co-workers

	Number asked or responded to the question	Number yes	Percent
Coworker who experienced IPV (yes and unsure)	858	220	25.6
Yes	858	72	8.4
Unsure	858	148	17.2
Female respondents	609	164	26.9
Male respondents	239	53	22.2
Impact on co-worker ability to work (yes and unsure)	218	187	85.8
Yes	218	34	15.6
Unsure	218	153	70.2
Potential warning signs of IPV experience	820	240	29.3
Coworker who has used abusive behaviour (yes and unsure)	859	139	16.2
yes	859	32	3.7
unsure	859	107	12.5
Female respondents	609	111	18.2
Male respondents	240	27	11.3
Impact on co-worker ability to work (yes and unsure)	137	108	78.8
yes	137	13	9.5
Unsure	137	95	69.3
Potential warning signs of use of abusive behaviour	827	122	14.8



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